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automatically checking an inventory for availability of an item corresponding to the customer order by accessing an inventory data base;

retrieving the item by accessing an inventory storage location data base;

building a load for shipment containing the retrieved item; and

scheduling the load for delivery to the customer. --

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#### REMARKS

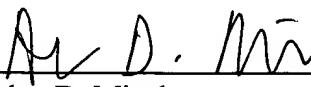
Consideration and entry of this preliminary amendment is respectfully requested. This is a preliminary amendment filed with the continuing prosecution application of allowed U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 08/474,970, filed June 7, 1995, with expected issue date of May 26, 1998, which itself is a continuation of U.S. Patent No. 5,666,493, issued September 9, 1997. The application as filed in the parent case contained claims 1-9. This preliminary amendment cancels claims 1-8 and adds new claims 10-18, leaving claims 9-18 remaining in the application. The amendment also amends the specification and abstract to clarify the invention as claimed.

New claims 10-16 are directed to a system for processing customer orders. Independent claim 10 recites the system's primary elements, while claims 11-16 are dependent claims reciting further elements of each of the primary elements. New claims 17 and 18 are independent claims directed to methods for processing a customer order. Support for the new claims is found in the specification.

The changes made to the application by this preliminary amendment are believed not to

introduce new matter, and the Examiner's entry of this preliminary amendment and consideration of the pending claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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